

BIOGRAPHICAL METHOD OF BIBLE STUDY

Tools you will need: Study Bible
 Exhaustive concordance
 Bible dictionary or encyclopedia
 A good Bible commentary

All of these tools are available in the church library, in the reference section, by the photocopy machine. All of my reference materials are available to you as well. Please do not hesitate to use them.

Step 1 - **List all the Scripture references** about the individual you've chosen to study. The concordance in the back of your study Bible will be a great place to start. This is where the exhaustive concordance will also be very helpful (Every reference to your chosen personage will be found in this book. I'll show you how to use it).
Be certain not to confuse different people who have the same name. For example: the name Zechariah can refer to thirty different men.

Step 2 - Read all of the references and write down your **first impressions**. Not every reference will contain pertinent material. Write down everything you don't understand (ie. Time lapses, illogical behaviors, obscure doctrine). You will want to reconcile these before you teach.

Step 3 - At your second reading, make a **chronological outline** of the person's life. We are all shaped by life's events. Mark significant reference points in his journey. At this time set aside those references that do not contribute to your understanding of the person.

Step 4 - At your third reading, **gather insights** to this person's character. Try to answer the following questions as accurately as possible:
What was this man's reputation with the author, his community and God?
What did adversity reveal about his character?
Was he faithful in the mundane and trivial things in life?
What does his name mean and was it ever changed?
What are the details of his family background, training and occupation?
What were his successes and failures and why?
What part did he have in the history of God's plan?
How did this man relate with others, and how was he influenced by them?
Did this man grow better or bitter through life's relentless storms?
What was the prevailing drive of his life?
Was this individual in close communion with God?
How did this man respond to God's word or God's prophets?
How did God ultimately deal with this man?

Answer any additional questions you have that may provide insight.

- Step 5 - **Determine the primary lesson(s)** taught or illustrated in this individual's life. Try to draft a single sentence that captures the essential principles illustrated by this man's character and consequences of his choices. This sentence will become the foundation upon which your lesson will be built and taught.
- Step 6 - Identify how your selected character **fulfills proverbial wisdom**. Look for a proverb that will help you and your hearers to make right choices, like or perhaps unlike the object of your study. For example, if your "king" was destroyed by his tongue, use your concordance to find a proverb about how our words have the power to ruin us.
- Step 7 - **Make your study transferable**. Good Bible study always threatens the way we act or think. We want to be able to share with others what we have learned through our study, but first the Lord has to deal with our own short falls in thought and behavior. Ask yourself the following questions and write out a simple plan of obedience.

Do I see myself in this man's life?

Has my study revealed any of my own weaknesses?

In this process have I discovered any of my strengths?

What impressed me most about this person's life?

How do my thoughts deviate from biblical thinking?

What changes do I intend to make?

The next step in making your study transferable is figuring out how to share important concepts you've learned (personally) with others. Now it is essential to be able to outline the life of your selected person. The outline could be based on a chronological order of events. Perhaps you could outline a list of character qualities consistent with one who, for example, surrounds himself with godly counsel. Maybe you would outline one man's downward spiral of pride and arrogance. Every outline is as unique as the individual that creates it. You will want to read your references inside and out in order to make this creative and biblically accurate.

Remember, you really want to communicate first and foremost the **Primary lesson(s)** you discovered for step 5. Your outline is simply a tool you will use to communicate this central lesson. I will spend time with each Sunday School teacher helping him put together a plan to teach the material. We will look at how to lead, how to ask questions and how to keep people interested in what's being taught.

PREPARING A BIOGRAPHICAL LESSON

1. Know your main idea! (This is developed in the fifth step of your study)
Remember the scripture dictates this idea.
2. A good outline supports your main idea (see example).
3. Your introduction will be used to make people contemplate your main idea.
4. Your conclusion will help the congregation apply or put into practice your main idea.
5. Supporting material (ie. Illustrations, stories) is gathered to add interest and keep the congregation actively thinking about the material.
6. Ask lots of questions. They keep people mentally involved in the process of making the same conclusion that you came to in your study.
 - Write out key questions to spark conversation.
7. Use supporting scriptures that contribute significant meaning to the study.
If supporting scriptures add little understanding simply don't use them.
8. Make your lesson applicable to the congregation. The word of God is relevant.
Show them how it relates to them personally.
9. Have additional questions prepared for the end of the study just in case you have too much time left at the end of the lesson.